

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7127
INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAGAU
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVODOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
:USUN NEW YORK 624
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS:PBOR GT UK BH
SUBJ:PRESIDENT LAUGERUD ON BELIZE ISSUE

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT'S REPLIES TO PRESS QUESTIONS WERE
NOTEWORTHY CHEIFLY FOR LINK HE MADE BETWEEN GOG CAMPAIGN TO
EDUCATE PUBLIC ABOUT BELIZE AND REQUIREMENT THAT ANY CHANGE
IN BLEIZE STATUS, FROM GUATEMALA PERSPECTIVE, BE SANCTIONED BY
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. END SUMMARY

2. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED PRESIDENT WAS QUESTIONED BY REPORTERS
AUGUST 11 ON SEVERAL ASPECTS OF BLEIZE SITUATION. FOLLOWING
QUOTES APPEARED IN PRENSA LIBRE AUGUST 12.

3. ON AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S SAN JOSE STATEMENT EXPRESSING U.S.
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SUPPORT FOR BLEIZE INDEPENDENCE: "THE FORIEGN MINISTRY RECEIVED
A COMMUNICATION FROM THE USG CLARIFYING THE SITUATION
AND (INDICATING) THAT SUCH SUPPORT WOULD OCCUR IF INDEPENDENCE
COMES ABOUT THROUGH BILATERAL AGREEMENT OF THE
(UK AND GUATEMALAN) GOVERNMENTS."

4. REPORTER: "ARE THERE STILL GUATEMALAN TROOPS IN THE

AREA BORDERING BELIZE?" PRESIDENT: "SO LONG AS THERE ARE BRITISH TROOPS NEAR THE BORDER, GUATEMALAN TROOPS WILL ALSO BE THERE."

5. REPORTER: "CAN GUATEMALA AT PRESENT GRANT INDEPENDENCE TO BELIZE?" PRESIDENT: "NO. BECUASE OF THE WAY THE CONSTITUION OF THE REPUBLIC IS DRAFTED IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GRANT INDEPENDENCE UNILATERALLY (SIC); IT IS PRECISELY FOR THIS REASON THAT THE WEEKLY RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAMS BEGAN, THAT IS ,TO INFORM THE NATION OF THE TRUE CIRCUMSTANCES (OF THE BELIZE ISSUE) FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. ONCE THIS PANORAMA IS COMPLETED, THE PEOPLE WILL KNOW EVERYTHING-- THE GORMULAS PROPOSED AND THE ARRANGEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN SOUGHT. SUBSEQUENTLY THE MATTER WILL GO BEFORE THE CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC WHICH, WITH THE COUNCIL OF STATE, CAN MODIFY THE STATUS OF BELIZE; BUT BEFORE TAKING A DECISION THE OPINION OF THE PEOPLE WILL BE HEARD."
END UNCLASSIFIED.

6. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE GOG HAS SUGGESTED UBLICLY THAT THE REASON BEHIND THE ANNOUNCED CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT BELIZE REALITIES IS TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK OFR A CHANGE IN TRANSITORY ARTICLE 1 OF THE GUATEMALAN CONSTITUTION, WHICH HOLDS BELIZE TO BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF GUATEMALA. MANY HERE WILL CONSTRUE THE PRESIDENT'S REFERENCE TO CONSULTING THE PEOPLE AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONTEMPLATING A COUNTRY-WIDE REFERENDUM. THIS IDEA HAS BEEN BRUITED VAGUELY FOR SOME WEEKS IN THE MEDIA AND PRIVATELY BY GOG OFFICIALS.
BOSTER

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